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THE WHALE-PROPELLED VESSEL AND OTHER LEAPS OF IMAGINATION AS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METAPHORS IN ADELBERT VON CHAMISSO'S TRAVEL DIARY OF THE 1815–1818 ROMANZOFF EXPEDITION

Johann J. K. Reusch

The French-German poet and natural scientist Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838) sailed to Alaska on a Russian-sponsored expedition ship, the *Rurik*, under the command of Captain Otto von Kotzebue (1787–1846) during the years 1815–1817.¹ The primary mission of the expedition was to find the fabled Northeast

¹ Count Nikolai P. Romanzoff (1754–1826), Russian chancellor and minister of Foreign Affairs, sponsored several long exploratory voyages.

Passage with the help of maps of the southern coast of Alaska drawn by the explorer James Cook, who charted the region in 1778. A close study of Cook's maps suggested to the expedition team the possible location of the passage in the form of an inlet that appeared to lead deep into the uncharted mainland near the present-day port of Kotzebue.

Chamisso recounted his personal experience of this journey in *Reise um die Welt mit der Romanzoffschen Entdeckungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1815–1818* (Journey Around the World with the Romanzoff Exploratory Expedition during the Years 1815–1818) in 1836, sixteen years after the journey. The text consisted of two parts, the *Tagebuch* (diary), and the *Bemerkungen und Ansichten* (comments and points of view). The *Tagebuch* not only offers a chronological account of the journey, but also reveals much about Chamisso's fascination with the mind's capability to transcend the limits of empirical reality through intuition and imagination. In this context, Chamisso freely shares profoundly personal thoughts that offer a psychopathological account of its author. His anxieties, manic-depressive states, and traumas, as well as the desire to escape them, emerge in metaphoric fantasies about modes of transportation that are informed by Pacific native trance rituals and European hypnosis experimentation.

Originally, Chamisso chronicled the journey in diaries and notes, some of which were appended to Kotzebue's *Entdeckungs-Reise in die Sued-See und nach der Berings-Strasse zur Erforschung einer nordoestlichen Durchfahrt: unternommen in den Jahren 1815, 1816, 1817 und 1818, auf Kosten Sr. Erlaucht des Herrn Reichs-Kanzlers Grafen Rumanzoff auf dem Schiffe Rurick* (1821). Chamisso, however, felt that the positioning of his findings at the end of the text detracted from their importance. He was also bitter about his exclusion from the editorial process: "The only reward that I could hope to reap from my efforts during and after the journey was to see the *Denkschriften* that I had insisted upon appear publicly in unaltered print and in a dignified format. The final result did not live up to my expectations."² The suggestion by his publishers Reimer and Hirzel, in

² "Der einzige Vorteil, den ich mir von meinen Bemühungen während und nach der Reise erhoffen durfte, war, diese von mir geforderten Denkschriften vor den Publikum, für welches sie bestimmt waren, in reinem Abdruck und würdiger Gestalt erscheinen zu sehen. Der Erfolg entsprach nicht meiner Erwartung. Was ich geschrieben, war von unzähligen, sinnzerstörenden Druckfehlern an vielen Stellen verfälscht und unverständlich; und dieselben in einem Errata anzuzeigen, wurde mir bestimmt abgeschlagen." (Volker Hoffmann and Johst Perfahl, eds. *Chamisso Ausgabe* (Winkler: Munich, 1955), vol. 2, 243.

1834, to publish his own account of the journey thus provided an opportunity for Chamisso to vindicate himself.

The timing of the publication date could not have been more crucial for Chamisso. He was under consideration for membership at the Berlin Academy of Sciences, but had not produced a major independent scientific text since his not-so-glamorous overview of Northern-German plants, *Übersicht der nutzbarsten und der schädlichsten Gewächse, welche wild oder angebaut in Norddeutschland vorkommen* (1827), other than articles and the appendix to Kotzebue's account. The combined *Tagebuch* and *Bemerkungen* addressed that objective. On a personal level, the publication of the *Tagebuch* provided a vehicle to incorporate an autobiography and worldview that highlighted the symbolic meaning of this journey for his personal growth, life, and career. This opportunity offered itself at a point in time at which Chamisso's health had successively declined over the previous years, and he anticipated his death, making the text his final major project.³

Chamisso intended the *Tagebuch* to establish him as an explorer and intellectual, yet it serves as a work of introspection as well, shedding light on his obsessions, phobias, and fantasies. These surface as recurrent references that express themselves through potent poetic figures. Images such as the whale, and its use for vessel propulsion, serve as complex metaphors for Chamisso's life, emotions and thoughts. They connect to the recurrent themes of solitary wandering, and fantastic modes of transportation that had earlier established his literary reputation, and define his biography. Yet, Chamisso's tendency to diffuse any boundaries between imagination and observation challenge limitations of rational science in favor of intuitive perception and non-Western views of the natural world.

After completing an initial exploration into the Bering Strait during the summer of 1816, the *Rurik* set course south toward the Aleutian island of Unalaska in late August to stock up on fresh meat, fruit and vegetables, and to avoid the Arctic winter. Upon approaching the Aleutians, Chamisso noted in his diary entry for 6 September 1816 that "numerous whales played around our ship and blew tall spouts of water

³ See Werner Feudel, *Adelbert von Chamisso* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1971), 172.

into the air in a circle. These whales invoke the memory of what I once heard an ingenious natural scientist mention in passing”:⁴

The next step that needs to be taken is much more within reach and more promising than that from the steam engine to the steamboat...the taming of the whale. Train the young ones in a fjord, attach a floating spiked harness under the front flippers, and conduct experiments! The resulting joining of the seas and the ensuing reduction of the distance between Archangel and St. Peter and Paul from eight to fourteen days travel time will be well worth the effort...and who shall be the Kornak⁵ of the water elephant, will come into play on its own.” (6 September 1816, *Journey around the World 1815–1818, Diary*).⁶

There are reasons to suspect that the “ingenious natural scientist” was fictitious. The vagueness of this “scientific” reference contrasts starkly with numerous precise references throughout the *Tagebuch*—all of which demonstrate Chamisso’s conscious effort to quote in excruciating detail by name, oeuvre title, even page number.⁷ The fact that Chamisso had created the character of a scientist before, in his 1814 novel *Peter Schlemihl*, further supports this theory. Given the much-explored autobiographical dimensions of that figure, it is safe to surmise that the nameless scientist quoted in the *Tagebuch* is no other than Chamisso himself.

⁴ “Zahlreiche Walfische spielten um unser Schiff und spritzten in allen Richtungen des Gesichtskreises hohe Wasserstrahlen in die Luft.... Diese Walfische rufen mir ins Gedächtnis, was ich einst von einem genialen Naturforscher ins Gespräch werfen hörte.” Adelbert von Chamisso, *Reise um die Welt mit der Romanzoffischen Entdeckungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1815–1818* (Weidmann: Leipzig, 1836), 168.

⁵ Indian elephant handler.

⁶ “Der nächste Schritt, der getan werden muß, der viel näher liegt und viel weiter führen wird als die Dampfmaschine mit dem Dampfschiffe, diesem ersten warmblütigen Tiere, das aus den Händen der Menschen hervorgegangen ist—der nächste Schritt ist, den Walfisch zu zähmen.... Erziehet Junge in einem Fjord, ziehet ihnen einen von Schwimmblasen getragenen Stachelgurt unter die Brustflossen, stellt Versuche an! Wahrlich, beide Meere zu vereinigen und die Entfernung zwischen Archangel und Sankt Peter und Paul auf acht bis vierzehn Tage Zeit zu verringern ist wohl des Versuchens wert... und wer der Kornak des Wasserelefanten sein soll, das alles findet sich von selbst.” (Chamisso, *Reise um die Welt*, 168).

⁷ See also Emil du Bois-Reymond, *Adelbert von Chamisso als Naturforscher* (Leipzig: Veit, 1889), 44.

Whether consciously invented or not, the anecdotal reference to whale propulsion was important enough to dominate the diary's entry for the day. Chamisso felt compelled to emphasize its factual relevance via a scientific citation—no matter how vague—as a means to justify his digressive discourse about a rather imaginative mode of transportation. In lieu of an actual source, and to add authority, he chose to attribute the concept for the whale-drawn vessel to an anonymous scientist.

Subsequent scholars of the Romanzoff expedition have upheld the opinion that the scientist Chamisso produced "the most competent description of the entire voyage (as compared to the published diaries of other crewmembers, the Captain of the ship *Rurik* August von Kotzebue and the expedition's artist Ludovik Andreevich Choris (1795–1828)."⁸ This conclusion based on the vast amount of written records Chamisso amassed during the expedition; in addition to a journal, and epistolary diaries, he kept scientific observations and notes. Selections from these texts served as the core material for the *Tagebuch* and the *Bemerkungen und Ansichten*. For both parts, Chamisso stressed "authenticity" repeatedly as an essential premise for travel accounts.⁹ However, closer examination reveals that several of Chamisso's descriptions deviate from what could have been observed *a priori*, and puts their "authenticity" into question.

None of the other crew members' diaries, for example, mentioned the memorable display of circling and blowing whales recorded by Chamisso on 6 September 1816. There are other accounts by Chamisso of encounters with whales that are not corroborated either by his fellow diarists on the *Rurik*. Among them is the description of an encounter with a whale a day earlier, on the morning of September 5 that came too close to the ship and had to be fired upon for deterrence. Chamisso could not have witnessed this event firsthand, because his diary entry notes that the canon shot awakened him while sleeping below deck.¹⁰ In

⁸ August C. Mahr, *The Visit of the Rurik* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 21.

⁹ "Was ein grad sinniger Mann, der selbst gesehen und geforscht, in der Kürze aufgezeichnet hat, verdient doch wohl in dem Archive der Wissenschaften niedergelegt werden." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 2). For a detailed discussion see Gisela Menza, *Adelbert von Chamisso's "Reise um die Welt mit der Romanzoffischen Entdeckungs-Expedition in den Jahren 1815–1818": Versuch einer Bestimmung des Werkes als Dokument des Überganges von der Spätromantik zur vorrealistischen Biedermeierzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1978), 55.

¹⁰ "Wir fahren am 14. September 1816 früh am Morgen mit günstigem Winde aus dem Hafen von Unalashka. Es wurde auf einen Walfisch geschossen, der uns in der Bucht zu nahe kam; ich lag noch in meiner Kojen." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 175).

addition, there was no mention of the disturbance entered into the captain's log, which furthermore discredits the factuality of Chamisso's entry. To the contrary, Kotzebue described two close encounters with whales earlier during the expedition that did not involve attempts to scare them away. One of them occurred at four o'clock in the morning on 13 February 1816:

There were a lot of whales in the Bay of Conception that spewed their fountains close to us; one of them was so bold as to lean against the *Rurik* about one foot below the surface; we therefore had the opportunity to watch him closely and to observe everyone of his breaths. It is certain to be a rare case that they dare to come so close in order to be admired in all of their splendor.¹¹

The second encounter took place on August 19:¹²

An uncannily large whale covered with shells and seaweed, blew his fountain so high that we got the mist into our faces, an experience that was not pleasant because the spewed water had a terrible smell; all the time he stayed above the water's surface for so long that a whaler would have had enough time to ram twenty harpoons into his body.¹³

¹¹ "Es gab in der Bay Conception sehr viele Wallfische die ihre Fontainen in unserer Nähe auspritzen; einer von ihnen hatte die Dreistigkeit, sich ungefähr einen Fuss unter der Oberfläche des Wassers an den *Rurik* zu lehnen, und wir hatten dadurch Gelegenheit, ihn recht genau zu betrachten und jeden seiner Athemzüge zu bemerken. Es ist gewiss ein seltener Fall, dass sie sich so ganz nah heran wagen, um sich in ihrer ganzen Herrlichkeit bewundern zu lassen." (Otto von Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise in die Süd-See und nach der Berings-Strasse zur Erforschung einer nordöstlichen Durchfahrt: unternommen in den Jahren 1815, 1816, 1817 und 1818, auf Kosten Sr. Erlaucht des Herrn Reichs-Kanzlers Grafen Rumanzoff auf dem Schiffe Rurick* (Weimar: Hoffmann, 1821), vol.1, 108-9.

¹² Twelve days later according to Gregorian calendar: September 1.

¹³ "Ein ungeheuer grosser, mit Muscheln und Seegras bedeckter Wallfisch, spritzte seine Fontaine so hoch, dass wir den Staub in's Gesicht bekamen, ein Begegniss, dass nicht angenehm war, da das ausgespritzte Wasser einen üblen Geruch hatte; dabei hielt er sich so lange über dem Wasser, dass ein Wallfischfänger Zeit gehabt hätte, ihm zwanzig Harpunen in den Leib zu jagen" (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol.1, 157).

Chamisso, however, does not mention any of these encounters in his entries during those days. These profound discrepancies from other eyewitness accounts suggest that much of the entry of September 6, whale-drawn vessel and all, may have been written with great poetic license, or in a particular state of mind that distorted Chamisso's perception and memory.

Why would Chamisso abandon the principles of scientific observation and substitute invention for authenticity? The answer appears as complex as the metaphor of the whale-drawn vessel itself. Chamisso had been influenced by Friedrich von Schlegel's (1772–1824) trailblazing and far-reaching ideas about art and literature, specifically the concept of *Progressive Universalpoesie* (Progressive Universal Poesis) (1798). This concept promoted the fusion of genius, science, art, philosophy, and natural poesis that placed the poetic expression, creativity, and ideas of the poet, above all laws—including empirical scientific methods.¹⁴ Chamisso and his friends attended his lectures in Berlin between the autumn of 1801 and the spring of 1804. The group of friends became so enthralled with Schlegel's theories that they founded in 1803 the literary society of the *Nordsternbund*.¹⁵ Its members drew additional inspiration from the natural philosophy of Franz von Baader (1765–1841), and advocated the principals of universality and assimilation as tenets of the Romantic era. These ideas centred around the belief that the personality of the poet serves as a catalyst that absorbs and transforms synaesthetically the multiple facets of the environment, and re-creates them through a process of Schlegelian "poetization." For Chamisso, the profoundly subjective process of poetization, in contrast to factual recitation, meant authenticity. A deconstruction of the poeticizing process subsequently reveals a wide range of multiple references that span from scientific interests to highly subjective and intuitive perceptions.

The size of the *Tagebuch* looms largely among the prose works written since the publication of his single most important literary achievement, the novel *Peter Schlemihl*. Chamisso had worried about matching its popularity and favorable reviews with a second novel, and never published another. Subsequent generations of scholars have

¹⁴ Friedrich von Schlegel, 116. *Athenäum-Fragment* (1798), see also Heinz Kindermann, ed., *Kunstanschauung der Frühromantik* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1931) vol. 3, 224.

¹⁵ With Julius Eduard Hitzig, Heinrich Julius Klaproth, Johann David Ferdinand Koreff.

inscribed *Peter Schlemihl* into the literary canon as a profoundly biographical and self-referential text. The *Tagebuch* can be considered a pendant to *Peter Schlemihl* because it too summarizes much of Chamisso's life: "Since I don't have to report anything [new] about the journey itself, I will infuse a few things that have hereto not flowed from my quill... purely personally, a chapter of my life."¹⁶ Chamisso thus culled his interpolations not from his original notes but from memory. In the *Tagebuch*, therefore, the recounting of the physical travel aboard the *Rurik* merges with a mental journey across key memories.

As a poet, Chamisso was skilled in invoking powerful metaphors packed with multiple references and meanings. Potent images like his discussion of whales, and the whale-drawn carriage serve to bait and mesmerize his readers. He invites them to dream themselves into the narrative (*bineinträumen*), as participants on a journey that ultimately takes them into the mind of the author.¹⁷ Familiar with hermeneutic traditions through his classical education and contact with Schleiermacher, Chamisso meant the *Tagebuch* to be read beyond the exoteric, superficial, toward an esoteric, deeper meaning.¹⁸ The same hermeneutic approach enables a reconstruction of Chamisso's state of mind, not only for the dream-traveling reader but also for a critical study of the *Tagebuch*.

Dreaming here serves as a narrative strategy that lures the reader into discovering and pursuing underlying desires. The involvement of the unconscious in Chamisso's *Tagebuch* crosses the threshold between the quotidian world, and the realm of fantasy and imagination that inevitably recalls the richly perceptive state of childhood as a Romantic ideal. In a state of daydreaming, Chamisso conjures up and connects to events and experiences that occurred several decades earlier. It is here that Schlegel's concept of Universal Poesis intersects with pre-Freudian explorations of the unconscious. Chamisso was familiar with the extremely popular texts by the Schelling disciple Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert (1780–1860), such as the *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der*

¹⁶ "Ich werde, da ich von der Fahrt selbst nichts zu berichten habe, einiges hier einschalten, das mir noch nicht in die Feder geflossen ist, rein menschlich, ein Kapitel aus meinem Leben." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 179).

¹⁷ "Oder vielmehr nur mich selbst in der fremden Umgebung dem teilnehmenden Leser zu vergegenwärtigen trachten; und entspräche der Erfolg dem Willen, so müsste sich jeder mit mir hinträumen, wo eben uns die Reise hinführte." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 3).

¹⁸ Chamisso attended Schleiermacher's lectures and knew him through literary circles such as Rachel Varnhagen's Salon.

Naturwissenschaft (Nocturnal Perspectives of the Natural Sciences) (1808) and the *Symbolik des Traumes* (Dream Symbolism) (1813). *Nachtseite* as an important manifesto of natural philosophy takes issue with the limitation of modern rational science imposed by empiricism. Schubert theorizes that the phenomenal world reveals and references underlying invisible forces that permeate the cosmos. In *Symbolik des Traumes*, he argues that dreams and deliria constitute states of the unconscious in which the psyche communicates according to special laws of association that imbue natural forms with special meanings. This image-based language of the psyche communicates "idea associations through a much more rapid, ghostlike, and shorter travel path than the state of awakenedness" and "expresses...in a few more moments more than could be said with words in whole hours."¹⁹ Much of this was derived from Franz Anton Mesmer's (1735–1815) findings that these images and underlying associations could be brought to the foreground through hypnosis, an approach developed further by (Johann) David Ferdinand Koreff (1783–1853), a physician and important figure in the university reforms under Hardenberg.²⁰ Koreff had been a member of the Jewish community in Berlin that fluidly overlapped with that of the French immigrants of which Chamisso was a part. They had been friends throughout their student years and founded the *Nordsternbund* together.

Chamisso's *bineinträumen* constitutes a self-induced hypnagogic trance that serves to induce a state of oneirism, and clearly borrows from Koreff's hypnotherapeutic practices. Chamisso utilizes this state to blur the distinction between real and imaginary, and reinvests the inherent disorientation of space and time from a literary point of view.

¹⁹ "So lange die Seele diese Sprache redet, folgen ihre Ideen einem andern Gesetz der Association als gewöhnlich, und es ist nicht zu läugnen, daß jene neue Ideen-verbindung einen viel rapideren, geisterhafteren und kürzeren Gang oder Flug nimmt, als die des wachen Zustandes, wo wir mehr mit unsern Worten denken. Wir drücken in jener Sprache durch einige wenige hieroglyphische, seltsam aneinander gefügte Bilder, die wir uns entweder schnell nacheinander oder auch nebeneinander und auf einmal vorstellen, in wenig Momenten mehr aus, als wir mit Worten in ganzen Stunden auseinander zu setzen vermöchten; erfahren in dem Traume eines kurzen Schlummers öfters mehr, als im Gange der gewöhnlichen Sprache in ganzen Tagen geschehen könnte, und das ohne eigentliche Lücken, in einem in sich selber regelmäßigen Zusammenhange, der nur freilich ein ganz eigentümlicher, ungewöhnlicher ist." (Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert, *Die Symbolik des Traumes* [Bamberg: Kunz, 1814], 1–3.)

²⁰ Koreff was a Jewish physician, who gained international fame through his hypno-therapeutic sessions that he conducted throughout Europe. After 1815, he was a *Serapiensbruder* and protege Hardenberg's, who appointed him the founding curator of the university at Bonn. Following his political downfall, he retreated to Paris where he lived until his death.

The fluidity of moments and locations, and the use of mises en abyme, epitomizes oneiristic texts, and aides Chamisso's narrative strategy. Here the dream becomes both container and contained, dream and speech about dream. Freudian psychoanalytic theory investigates the creative impetus of the writer in this context; it equates the function of creative writing with the motive force of dreams: the work of art, like a dream, involves the "(disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) desire." Just as children construct alternative worlds to fulfil their wishes, so writers play out latent desires in fictional form.²¹ Most important to psychoanalysis is the understanding that daydreaming and hallucination reveal images associated with desires and their fulfilment in the unconscious mind. Chamisso's fantasies about the fulfilment of desires are revealed through the process of writing and reading. In contrast to openly apparent desires exist—as psychoanalysis reveals—unconscious desires that urge for fulfilment and can be explored through imagination. We know from Chamisso's diary entries that long periods of darkness, monotony at sea, and thick fog invoked a state of semiconsciousness that he described as "a kind of semi-sleep (that) permeated a large part of one's existence with dreams."²²

Biographical studies of Chamisso have suggested that he began to renounce natural philosophy during the 1820s, and became critical of Koreff.²³ It would be fallacious, however, not to separate personal disputes and public statements from actual practice and deeply ingrained beliefs. This held true particularly at a moment when Chamisso was eager to secure a legacy within the scientific community during a period when a rational approach to science became the status quo at the academy. Two of Chamisso's comedies *Die Wunderkur* (1825) and *Der Wunderdoktor* (1828) appear to take issue with the "Mesmeric craze" but also can be interpreted in the context of satire and Romantic humor. Chamisso may have wanted to lampoon Koreff's stellar ascent (which may have created tensions between him and Koreff). However, the frontispiece to Chamisso's posthumously published collection of works, edited by Chamisso's close friend Julius Eduard Hitzig (1780–1849),

²¹ Sigmund Freud, "Der Dichter und das Phantasieren," in Sigmund Freud, *Studienausgabe* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1982), vol. 10, 170–79.

²² "Eine Art Halbschlaf nahm einen großen Teil des Lebens mit Träumen ein" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 179).

²³ Rene-Marc Pille, "Sechs ungedruckte Briefe Koreffs und Chamisso: Zeugnisse einer erloschenen Freundschaft," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 8:2 (1987): 171–78.

features in a Greek inscription a cryptic homage to the North Star. This reference to the *Nordsternbund* clearly served to enshrine Chamisso into the circle of mystic and natural philosophers for posterity.

Indeed, the sum total of Chamisso's oeuvre runs counter to a rational approach to writing, and favors instead the sensual, mood, the experiential and the dream. The *Tagebuch*, in fact, serves as a retrospective culmination of a critical attitude toward logical restraints of perception. The fragmentary and aphoristic style of the text formally mirrored this attitude through the choice of the epistolary diary as a vehicle of artistic expression. In a state of daydreaming, Chamisso was able to draw from a plenitude of sources that delved deep into his personal past, drawing from prior travels, encounters, and powerful images and memories collected over time. Among these emblematic references that held powerful, even fetishized meaning, were those relating to the trope of whales, and whale-like creatures in European classical culture. Among the typical readings in a humanist oriented educational institution like the French college in Berlin that Chamisso had attended, would have been Herodotus's *The Histories* (440 BCE). In it, Herodotus tells the story of Arion of Methymna who was carried ashore upon a dolphin's back at Taenarum. In addition, this popular myth had been adapted as a poem by Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) in 1798, and also by August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845) in 1797–99. Chamisso was an admirer and close acquaintance of Tieck, with whom he frequented Rahel Levin-Varnhagen's salon, the center of Berlin romanticism (1816–1835). Schlegel's poem, on the other hand, was included in the second volume of his *Poetische Werke* that appeared in a newly expanded version, which was completed shortly before the *Rurik's* departure.²⁴ Given Chamisso's competitive interest in Schlegel's poetry, such a definitive collection would have been included among the poetry books that Chamisso brought with him aboard the ship.²⁵ Schlegel's poem personified the dolphin in a dialogue that suggests the image of a dolphin-drawn vessel:

²⁴ August Wilhelm Schlegel, *August Wilhelm Schlegels Poetische Werke* (Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer, 1811–1815).

²⁵ Chamisso studied contemporary poetry meticulously while aboard the *Rurik*, and relates his discovery of technical inconsistencies in Goethe's poems in the *Tagebuch*.

Farewell, thou faithful, friendly fish! Would that I could reward thee; but thou canst not wend with me, nor I with thee. Companionship we may not have. May Galatea queen of the deep, accord thee her favour, and thou, proud of the burden, draw her chariot over the smooth mirror of the deep.²⁶

Chamisso had worked with Schlegel on the translation of his *Wiener Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1801–1804) into French. The two of them had toured Paris together barely four years before the *Rurik* left port. They visited the standard tourist sites that almost certainly included Versailles, where they would have viewed together one of its main attractions, the eruption of the Apollo fountain, during which dolphins that spray tall spouts in a semicircle appear to pull the god's carriage out of the water. Water-spouting dolphins arranged in circles—as in the Apollo fountain—were a common ingredient of European fountains. Other fountains in Paris also featured whale-like creatures that ferried mythological figures like Galatea in vessels, and transported figures like Cupid and Arion on their back. Kotzebue's use of the French term *fontaine* in his description of blowing whales²⁷ that Chamisso reread in preparation for the *Tagebuch* would have created an association with fountains, and invoked the memory of the Apollo fountain at Versailles.

Chamisso's traveling company in Paris included Alexander von Humboldt, the renowned explorer whom Chamisso particularly admired. Chamisso tended to read his and other travelogues to allow his mind to seek respite from periods of depression and isolation.²⁸ One can only imagine the reaches of the discussion among these men, yet

²⁶ "Leb' wohl und könnt' ich dich belohnen,

Du treuer, freundlicher Delphin!

Du kannst nur hier, ich dort nur wohnen:

Gemeinschaft ist uns nicht verlihn.

Dich wird auf feuchten Spiegeln

Noch Galatea zügel'n,

Du wirst sie stolz und heilig ziehn."

(Eduard Böcking, ed., *August Wilhelm Schlegel's Poetische Werke* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1846), vol. I, 204–10.

²⁷ Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, 157.

²⁸ Letter to Rosa Maria Varnhagen, May 18, 1812, in *Adelbert von Chamisso's Werke*, Eduard Hitzig ed. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1852), VI, 358.

their shared classical education and fascination with travel would have most certainly characterized the conversation. Topics from classical mythology referenced in most French art of the day would have intersected with ongoing debates about revolutionary Europe that would have touched upon politics in Republican America. The fact that Galatea's name graced many a bow of a ship, including the companion vessel of the Mayflower would have been a piece of trivia that could have emerged easily in conversation. Thus, travel, dolphin transportation, and the New World were permanently associated in Chamisso's unconsciousness.

The numerous images of Cupid and Arion riding the dolphin, as well as Galatea's dolphin-drawn carriage had been immortalized from Antiquity through Neoclassicism²⁹ as well as in music.³⁰ Chamisso had worked as a miniature painter in the Royal Prussian porcelain factory as a teenager to support his refugee parents, sketched many a drawing during the journey, generally had a keen interest in the arts, and even attended lectures by the neo-classical artist Jacques-Louis David (1749–1825).³¹ Classical maritime themes would have offered themselves as conversation topics between Chamisso and the expedition's artist, Ludovik Choris. Choris seems to have been more than just a technical draughtsman responsible for recording botanical specimen since his reputation as an artist was on the rise in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Adam Johann von Krusenstern (1770–1846), von Kotzebue's naval educator, father in law, and chief adviser to the expedition—in his foreword to von Kotzebue's *Entdeckungsreise*—made sure to highlight “the ovation he (Choris) was awarded by the most famous of the St. Petersburg artists and the president of the St. Petersburg academy.”³² Choris trained in the neoclassical model, and continued to study under Jean-Baptiste Regnault (1754–1829) and François Gerard (1770–1837) in Paris. Mentioned also is a large portfolio of artwork that he brought aboard the *Rurik*.³³ Keeping with convention, it would have

²⁹ Many of the great masters of art depicted this theme in variations, including Raphael, Gaulli, Poussin, Rubens, and Regnault.

³⁰ E.g. Friedrich Händel's popular oratory *Acis und Galatea* (1718).

³¹ Chamisso, *Reise*, 21.

³² “Das Lob, das er von den berühmtesten Künstlern Peterburgs, so wie von dem Präsidenten der Petersburger Akademie eingeerntet hat” (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 1, 13).

³³ “Der Reichtum seines mitgebrachten Portefeuilles, aus welchem nur die wenigsten Blätter dem Publikum haben mitgeteilt werden können.” (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 1, 13).

contained drawings after prints and master paintings with classical subject matter such as Cupid or Arion riding the dolphin, or other mythological maritime subjects of sea gods that included whale-like creatures such as dolphins. Chamisso and Choris stayed in contact after the expedition ended, collaborated on Choris's account of the Romanzoff expedition, and met up again in Paris in 1825.

There can be no doubt that Chamisso's mind was preoccupied with a curiosity about the life and habitat of whales in addition to his exposure to their subject matter in the high culture of Europe. Chamisso indicated in the essays appended to Kotzebue's report of the expedition that he had read several accounts of whale hunting.³⁴ Though whale products had been used increasingly frequent since the seventeenth century throughout Europe, few Europeans had actually seen living whales as conveyed by the numerous imaginary images and accounts that enshrined these animals in the realm of the mythological and exotic. The occasional whale cadaver that washed ashore still managed to create a sensation, and the tales told by whalers returning from the Arctic rarely failed to enthrall their listeners, and ultimately the mind of the public. Ancient accounts about ships swallowed by gigantic whales—fortified by the biblical story of Jonah—were not lost on the crew of the relatively small *Rurik*. The sixth-century Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, detailed how a great sea monster—presumably a whale—destroyed vessels in the sea of Marmora, in addition to accounts of ships rammed by whales. Nineteenth-century scientists took ancient sources at face value, and the sea and the whale constituted an enigma. In fact, illiterate seamen would have possessed more accurate knowledge of the marine world such as currents, tides, and whales than scholars.³⁵ In the natural sciences, whales were not classified with their terrestrial congeners as mammals until 1758, when Linnaeus coined the term and did away with Aristotle's outmoded term of the quadruped.

To the men aboard the *Rurik* the world of whales remained mysterious as well. Kotzebue had circumnavigated the world before,

Some of Choris's work display a neoclassical bent that implies a thorough knowledge of classical mythology.

³⁴ Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 3, 158. Among the citations were texts by Hendrick Hamel, Henry Busch, and James Burney.

³⁵ Margaret Deacon, *Scientists and the Sea, 1650-1900. A Study of Marine Science* (London and New York: Academic Press, 1971), 84.

and yet still expressed his wonderment over each of two close encounters with whales during the Romanzoff expedition. Chamisso, despite reading available accounts, appears to have been at a loss when distinguishing between different species of whales. To be sure, Chamisso was a botanist not a mammalianist (that was the job of his colleague Johann Friedrich Gustav von Eschscholtz, who also doubled as the ship's physician) but during the era of the universally trained scholar (Universalgelehrte), strict disciplinary boundaries did not exist. It also appears that—if Eschscholtz had been able to make definite identifications—Chamisso would have used them. Instead, Chamisso guesses during a distant sighting of a whale off the coast of South America: "One may surmise that it could be a *Pottfisch* (literally translates as Sperm Fish rather than Sperm Whale) that is pursued under the hot sun near the coast of Brazil. One supposedly encounters these fish already below the 12th degree southern latitude."³⁶ It is important for the discussion at hand that Chamisso not only would have been unable to identify many of the whale species that he may have encountered but also would not have distinguished between dolphins and small whales.

Chamisso's apparent preoccupation with whales would have been inspired further by a study of the numerous new star constellations that were introduced by Johann Elert Bode (1747–1826) through numerous widely read publications. Bode was the director of the Berlin observatory during the years of Chamisso's study at the university there, and one of the most recognized astronomers of the period. "Bode's Law" provided a formula that measured the mean distances of the planets from the sun in astronomical units. His popular astronomical atlas, *Anleitung zur Kenntniß des gestirnten Himmels* (Instructions for the Knowledge of the Starry Sky) (1782), represented the stellar configurations and was considered the authoritative standard oeuvre that was reprinted in more than eleven editions between 1782 and 1858, which were used throughout Europe. Like his 1801 collection of twenty star maps, and a catalogue of 17,240 stars published as *Uranographia*, these charts contained holes indicating the location of the stars; when illuminated from the back, they could be compared against actual constellations in the night sky. Von Krusenstern, the Romanzoff expedition's chief

³⁶ "Man soll den Fischen schon unter dem zwölften Grad südlicher Breite begegnen.—Es ist vermuthlich der Pottfisch (Physeter), dem unter heisser Sonne an den Küsten Brasiliens nachgestellt wird" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 80).

consultant responsible for outfitting the *Rurik* had a particular interest in astronomy, and had insisted on the newest maps and telescopes, making it certain that such charts would have been found aboard the ship.³⁷ The officers and the scientists studied stellar constellations for navigational purposes; in addition, stargazing served as one of the few available forms of entertainments to pass the long hours at sea as noted by Chamisso on several occasions.³⁸ The constellation *cetus* (whale), an extensive formation between the star formations Pisces and the river Eridanus would have been visible in the early autumn sky around September 6, the time of Chamisso's discourse on whales. In the Cetus myth, which anybody with a basic knowledge of Greek mythology would have known, Hermes gave a pair of his winged sandals to the castaway Perseus so that he could fly across the ocean to kill the Gorgon Medusa. From her blood, the winged horse Pegasus was created. On the back of Pegasus, Perseus flew across the seas again and rescued the chained princess Andromeda from the sea monster Cetus.

Such fabulous modes of transportation across the oceans fit seamlessly into a stream of consciousness that was associated with an equally fabulous mission that occupied Chamisso's mind: the search for the mythical Northwest Passage that was dismissed as a fable by many explorers and scientists. Chamisso knew that the destination of migratory whales included the Northeast Passage, if it was indeed an actual part of the subarctic geography. Hunters knew that whales traveled deep into water inlets where food was plenty either in plankton for Baleen whales, and salmon for odontoceti. Small whale species like Minke whales, Belugas, Orcas, or Dall porpoises, would have been abundant near the Aleutians during late August and early September, most of them sharing a very similar playful behavior in approaching ships, and resembling neoclassical representations.³⁹ Only the much larger Baleen whales, however, would have been able to blow through their double blowholes the impressive "tall spouts of water" that Chamisso described. These spouts could have reached ten to fifteen feet in height. Despite his claiming somewhat of an expertise about whales,

³⁷ Krusenstern, foreword to Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*.

³⁸ Chamisso, *Reise*, 49 and 55.

³⁹ Stephan Leatherwood, Randall R. Reeves, William R. Perrin, and William E. Evins, *Whales, Dolphins, and Porpoises of the Eastern North Pacific and Adjacent Arctic Waters* (New York: Dover, 1988).

we cannot be certain that he actually observed a larger whale up-close, even though encounters with humpback whales are not uncommon, especially near the Inside Passage—not however, the large pod recorded by Chamisso.⁴⁰ Even sightings of numerous whales tended to leave much to the imagination because their bodies emerged only partially and briefly, usually in a great distance.

Chamisso's frequent references and pre-journey readings about them reveal a profound interest if not obsession that would have culminated upon entering the boundaries between the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. The Bering Sea was enshrined in whaling mythology as the place where giant whales would congregate as far as the eye could see. Indeed, even today the Bering Sea serves as the main summer feeding ground for Gray Whales, before their southward migration. Here, they tend to form larger loose social groups beyond their usually small pods. Before their decimation through an increase in commercial whaling, this could have included close to a hundred whales in one place, a formidable sight that had inspired mythical narratives.⁴¹ The absence of such a spectacle during Chamisso's travel through these waters would have resulted in a profound disappointment of his eager anticipation. The stories of a whale harpooner whom Chamisso met only days before the *Rurik's* departure (told under the chapter heading *Vorfrende* (joyful anticipation)) had created visceral expectations.⁴² The envisioned whale pods however did not manifest themselves as hoped.⁴³ Even Kotzebue expressed his disappointment with the absence of the anticipated whales, even though his obsession was with the discovery of uncharted coastline.⁴⁴ If indeed Chamisso would have missed one or all of the earlier close encounters with whales because he was below

⁴⁰ My friend Michael Wann provided important editorial comments based on his firsthand experience as a commercial fisherman in that region.

⁴¹ See Dale W. Rice and Allen A. Wolman, *The Life History and Ecology of the Gray Whale* (Stillwater: American Society of Mammalogists, 1971); Mary Lou Jones, Stephen Leatherwood, and Steven L. Swartz, eds., *The Gray Whale* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), and Ben Bennett, *The Oceanic Society Field Guide to the Gray Whale* (San Francisco: Legacy, 1983).

⁴² "Ich horchte ihm lehnbegierig zu und sah vor mir die Eisfelder und Berge und die Küsten des Polarmeeres, in das ich von der Berings-Straße aus einzudringen die Hoffnung hatte und worin Gleiches zu erleben und zu erdulden mein Los sein konnte" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 16).

⁴³ "Die Walfische, die sich hier im Sommer aufhalten, waren noch nicht eingetroffen." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 301).

⁴⁴ "Einen Anblick den wir dort hatten ganz entbehren müssen, waren eine Menge Walfische und Wallrosse, die in unserer Nähe spielten" (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, 1, 155).

deck—as was the case during at least one of them—the disappointment would have amplified considerably. In addition, the absence of such an encounter would have proved disappointing to the readers of the *Tagebuch*, who would have expected the description of such an account. Both of the most prominent recent German expeditions under Krusenstern and Kotzebue fulfilled such expectations of the travel genre, and describe whale encounters to set up a scenario that was meant to enhance the realms of the fantastic and exotic. Chamisso had reread closely both of their accounts in preparation for his own text.

Whales thus preoccupied Chamisso's mind upon the re-creation of the diary for publication, and the musings about the whale-drawn vessel on 6 September 1816. We can trace some of the events of that day through Kotzebue's log and the expedition's artist Choris's diary. The only mention of whales on that day consists of one served for dinner upon arrival at Unalaska. However, both of them described a flotilla of kayaks coming to greet the *Rurik* and guide it safely through the treacherous entrance to the harbor of Unalaska.

Kotzebue specifically provides a detailed description of the spectacle: “[At the entrance to the harbor] the numerous Aleuts in their single-seat *baydars*,⁴⁵ driven here by curiosity, provided a strange sight.”⁴⁶ Indeed the smooth moist glistening animal skins of the kayaks with the single erect upper torsos of the Natives clad in light animal skins with white polar bear trim around the hoods, must have been an impressive appearance as they circled around the *Rurik*. This spectacle appears to have inspired Chamisso's description of whales in an almost identically choreographed circular arrangement, with tall spouts of water shooting into the air.⁴⁷ In the disappointing absence of actual whales, he projected a mental image or *Gestalt* upon the Native paddlers.

In addition to the circling kayaks, two large rowboats manned by five crewmembers each that were sent by the agent of the Russian-American Company, Ivan A. Kuskov, pulled the *Rurik* through the

⁴⁵ Russian for kayak.

⁴⁶ “Hier gewährten uns die vielen Aleuten in ihren kleinen einsitzigen Baydaren, welche die Neugierde herbeigetrieben, einen seltsamen Anblick” (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 1, 166).

⁴⁷ In this context, Kotzebue's choice of words would have signified specific semantics for a nonnative German speaker like Chamisso. The most common idiom would have been “durch Neugierde angelockt” (lured by curiosity); Kotzebue's derogatory if not racist attitude toward native people prompted the choice of “herbeigetrieben” (herded or driven from) that would have conjured up a mental image of a herd (or pod) of animals in Chamisso's mind.

narrow entrance to the harbor. Such an observation could have given rise to Chamisso's vision for the whale-drawn vessel. The stories told by tribal members who had been interviewed by the scientists aboard the *Rurik* with the help of translators could have informed this vision further.⁴⁸ Yupik whale hunters in the region described the "harnessing" of whales as a practice of their forefathers according to native folklore: Harpoons driven into sides of the head of a whale calf were attached to lines with inflated bladders made from Walrus stomach pokes. These flapped when pulled, and frightened the whale into being steered upon the beach.⁴⁹ These kinds of stories circulated also among the Russian traders and fishermen with whom the *Rurik* crew spent the long winter in Kamchatka.

The desire to complete the search for the Northeast Passage as the crew faced the onset of winter would have inspired the conclusion that if one could harness whales who travelled faster than the expedition's ship, the mission could be accomplished more rapidly. Just days before Chamisso's discourse about the whale-drawn vessel, Kotzebue concluded from measurements of the currents that they were approaching a passage that he hoped to provide access to the Northeast Passage.⁵⁰ Lack of wind and adverse currents, however, prevented their investigation for days. The *Rurik*'s slow speed and the dropping temperatures described by Kotzebue must have frustrated Chamisso, as it did everyone else on the ship.⁵¹ Increasing Arctic winds would have chilled temperatures by up to 20 degrees Fahrenheit on the open water.⁵² The time of sunset would have advanced increasingly faster, and the beginning of the rainy season with humidity in the 80 percent range would have begun to drench the ship, confining nonessential crew to a claustrophobic space under deck. Those who had most invested in the expedition's mission, the captain and the scientists realized that time for the completion of their objective literally was running out due to the quickly approaching Nordic winter.

⁴⁸ Chamisso, *Reise*, 308.

⁴⁹ Carol Zane Jolles, "Paul Silook's Legacy: The Ethnohistory of Whaling on St. Lawrence Island," *Studies in Whaling* 3 (1995): 238.

⁵⁰ Chamisso, *Reise*, 146.

⁵¹ Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 1, 157.

⁵² See Jonathan T. Overpeck et al., "Arctic Environmental Change of the Last Four Centuries," *Science* 5341 (1997): 1251-56.

Chamisso's diary entries at this time reflect his very personal anxiety about the winter as a season that spawned states of profound depression in him.⁵³ This occurs in tandem with a general sense of the expedition's failure and a shift of focus toward "the main goal to escape the Nordic winter" and thoughts of death if not suicide: "the burial shroud of snow."⁵⁴ Lamenting the winter, Chamisso declared that "it is incomprehensible and tantamount to a lie to everyone who has ever crossed the polar circle that the human being might be capable to settle below the 72nd degree latitude in the land of winter where one is capable to endure a miserable existence solely through the powers of one's mind."⁵⁵

Chamisso tried to keep himself distracted from the bleakness, desolation and depression through imagination and fantasy. He transposed his own anxieties about the impending winter upon a fictitious daydreamed scenario: "Indeed, I wish to live in the land of palms and observe from there the old monster's [winter] banishment to the towers of the mountains."⁵⁶ Once again, the scientist quickly buttresses his poetic digression by referencing a recently published account of a scientific expedition that reiterates a persistent myth about a climate oasis above the polar circle by citing Ostjak fishermen living near the sixtieth degree latitude as evidence for its existence.⁵⁷

⁵³ "Habe ich daheim wieder einmal den Winter ausgehalten, so glaube ich als ein mutiger Mann genug getan zu haben" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 176).

⁵⁴ "Unsere Hauptaufgabe war es jetzt dem Nordischen Winter auszuweichen" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 175).

⁵⁵ "Aber unbegreiflich und lügengleich bleibt es für den, welcher einmal den Winterkreis überschritten hat, daß der Mensch, das gabelförmige, nackte Tier, sich in Winterlanden, unter dem zweiundfünfzigsten, ja unter dem zweiundsiebzigsten Grad nördlicher Breite anzusiedeln vermessen hat, wo er nur durch die Macht des Geistes sein kümmerliches Dasein zu fristen vermag." (Chamisso, *Reise*, 176); see also letter to Hitzig from Unalaska "Schnee bis an das Ufer! Am 7./19. Juni unter der Breite von Berlin!" (Adelbert von Chamisso, *Leben und Briefe*, Eduard Hitzig, ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1864), 36).

⁵⁶ "Wahrlich, ich möchte in der Region der Palmen wohnen und gewahren von da den alten Unhold auf die Zinnen des Gebürges gebannt. Gern auch wollte ich ihm in seinem Reiche mit Party oder Roß einen Staatsbesuch abstatten; aber hart finde ich es, ihn daheim die halbe Zeit des Jahres zu beherbergen" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 178).

⁵⁷ "Die unter dem sechzigsten Grad nördlicher Breite ansässigen ostjakischen Fischer, lehrt uns Adolf Erman (*»Reise«* I, Seite 721), wissen auch von einem verlorenen Paradiese; aber sie verlegen es gegen Norden und über den Polarkreis hinaus!" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 177). Chamisso refers to Adolf Erman's (1806–1877) *Reise um die Erde durch Nord-Asien und die beiden Ozeane in den Jahren 1828–1830* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1833). Erman was the son of the scientist Paul Erman who had been Chamisso's teacher at the French College, and later at the University in Berlin.

Fantastic images like this frame Chamisso's discussion of the whale-drawn vessel, and tend to be almost ecstatic in nature: whales playing, fountains spouting—a spectacle preceded by the sighting of the island of Unalaska, “its mountains like the towers of a castle bathed in golden-red light.”⁵⁸ These descriptions reveal a euphoric state of mind when compared to the entry of the same day by von Kotzebue: “a seaman rarely is forced to endure a sight as horrible and desolate as this island. . . . Black bluffs of magma ascend vertically from the sea to heights covered with eternal ice.”⁵⁹ Chamisso's invocation of the power of the mind as a mode of survival during states of anxiety, as a diversion or transference from bouts with depression, likely explains the obvious contrast between the two men's perceptions. In fact, the repeated references in the *Tagebuch* to castle-like geographies underline the tropes of escape and transportation to and via mythical environs as sites of fortification and refuge. Chamisso's imaginary castles levitate above the cloud level in the sky, and can be equated with the German idiomatic term of the *Luftschloss* or castle in the air. It is also akin to another German idiom of imagination, the *Wolkenschloss* (castle of clouds) that floats across the sky. Where Kotzebue records dissolving fog in captain's log, Chamisso perceives “Infinite flocks of waterfowl gliding low above the water's surface, that appeared from afar like low-lying floating islands.”⁶⁰ Chamisso's interest in the perceptive powers of the

For the widespread perpetuation of the “polar paradise” myth see also Alexander Mackenzie, *Die Nord-Polarländer: Nach ältern und den neuesten Reisebeschreibungen namentlich nach den Berichten Mackenzie's, Scoreby's, desgleichen der Seefahrer Roß, Parry und Otto v. Kotzebue, und mit Benutzung der Werke Hooker's, Henderson's, Anspach's* (Pest and Leipzig: Hartleben, 1822). Chamisso kept up with exploration-related publications, and adopted narrative styles and references that he thought to be promising for the popularity of his own text.

⁵⁸ “Am Morgen des 6. Septembers hatten wir ein herrliches Schauspiel. Ein dunkler Himmel überhing das Meer, die hohen zerrissenen, schneebedeckten Zinnen von Unalaska prangten, von der Sonne beschienen, in roter Glut” (Chamisso, *Reise*, 167).

⁵⁹ “Den 6ten [September] bei Anbruch des Tages verschwand der Nebel, und die NO Spitze der Insel, welche wir jetzt ganz deutlich sahen, war nur sechs Meilen von uns entfernt. Selten wird ein Seefahrer einen so grauenvollen und öden Anblick haben, als diese Insel, besonders von ihrer NO Seite gewährt. Schwarze Lavauf der steigen senkrecht aus dem Meer empor, bis zu einer Höhe, welche ewiges Eis bedeckt. Die ganze Insel scheint aus lauter spitzen, dicht nebeneinanderliegenden Bergen zu bestehen, wovon einige so hoch sind, dass ihre Gipfel bis in die Wolken reichen. . . . Um sechs Uhr erhob sich ein mässiger Wind aus SO, der, weil er contrair war, uns zwang, den Tag und die ganze Nacht in der Nähe von Unalaska zu lavieren” (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol. 1, 166).

⁶⁰ “Unendliche Flüge von Wasservögeln, die niedrig über dem Wasserspiegel schwebten, glichen von fern niedrigen schwimmenden Inseln” (Chamisso, *Reise*, 168).

mind echoes throughout the text, including several discourses about mirages (*Luftspiegelungen*).⁶¹

Distorted perception, emphasized intuitive contemplation, and autohypnotic daydreaming, transport the author to various places in his life, including his childhood.⁶² Chamisso spent the earliest part of his childhood in his ancestral castle before his family abandoned it fleeing from the turmoil of the French Revolution. The *sans-culottes* burnt the castle to the ground, making impossible a physical return, except journeying there via his dreams and imagination. Subsequently, the figure of the castle became an unattainable obsession with family, security and home. The search for a place of belonging and the desire to escape from a world Chamisso perceived as cold and hostile became a reoccurring theme throughout his life.

Ephemeral, fleeting images of castles such as the one evoked by the sighting of Unalaska also are found embodied in faraway seeming unreachable mountain chains in other texts such as Peter Schlehmihl and the poem *Schloss Boncourt* (1827):

I dream myself back as a child...
 Why do you haunt me, images
 That long forgot I thought?
 High above the shady woods
 A shimmering castle rises,
 I know the towers, and the peaks...
 Thus you stand, castle of my fathers,
 Faithful and firm in my mind,
 And vanished from the earth.

⁶¹ "Auf der Insel Sarytschew umringten uns alle Täuschungen der Kimming. Ich sah eine Wasserfläche vor mir, in der sich ein niedriger Hügel spiegelte, welcher sich längs des jenseitigen Ufers hinzog. Ich ging auf dieses Wasser zu; es verschwand vor mir, und ich erreichte trocknen Fußes den Hügel. Wie ich ungefähr den halben Weg dahin zurückgelegt, war ich für Eschscholtz, der da zurückgeblieben war, von wo ich ausgegangen, bis auf den Kopf in die spiegelnde Luftschicht untergetaucht, und er hätte mich, so verkürzt, eher für einen Hund als für einen Menschen angesehen" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 147-48).

⁶² "Ich träumte nie von der Gegenwart, nie von der Reise, nie von der Welt, der ich jetzt angehörte; die Wiege des Schiffes wiegte mich wieder zum Kinde, die Jahre wurden zurückgeschraubt, ich war wieder im Vaterhause, und meine Toten und verschollene Gestalten umringten mich, sich in alltäglicher Gewöhnlichkeit bewegend, als sei ich nie über die Jahre hinausgewachsen, als habe der Tod sie nicht gemäht" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 179).

Here too, the act of conscious dreaming serves to alter empirical reality, and allows the mind to travel across time and space. In the context of the endless days in the open sea, Boncourt becomes the legendary Atlantis to which one travels via sea-creature drawn vessels. Equally, the floating islands become fleeting ephemeral places that are never rooted in one specific geographic location. As both the floating island and the castle in the air are not fixed in a definable place—other than Chamisso's mind where they are obsessively fixated—they themselves constitute moving modes of transportation. The expedition ship too Chamisso perceives as "levitating between the blue of the sea and thee blue of the sky."⁶³ This, as Chamisso muses, is the homeland (*Heimat*) of the seafarer, both prison and mode of escape at once.⁶⁴ Tangible and imaginary worlds intersect aboard the wooden microcosm of the *Rurik* and shape the path toward the fantasy of a vessel drawn by whale.⁶⁵ The concept and location of home then, further complicated by Chamisso's expatriate status, remains intangibly elusive. Chamisso's own comments elucidate this further through his definition of home as the academic ivory tower, the university—as a concept rather than a tactile place, defining home(land) as a site of mental exchange.⁶⁶ Whereas the empiricist Kotzebue could not help but feel dread upon the sighting of external ice, the poeticizing Chamisso through his mind-over-matter approach was able to transport himself beyond the quotidian world to a mental refuge.

While the expedition initially promised to complement the author's restlessness, it began to compound feelings of isolation without the possibility of escape. The small ship was crammed with a Russian-speaking crew, from whom he felt isolated due to the language barrier and the hierarchical order enforced by the officers. Kotzebue was dismissive of Chamisso and considered him an inferior, which he made

⁶³ "Bei solcher Entdeckungsreise schwebt es über zwei Drittel der Zeit in völliger Abgeschiedenheit zwischen der Bläue des Meeres und der Bläue des Himmels" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 24).

⁶⁴ "Überall ist für einen das Schiff, das ihn hält, das alte Europa, dem er zu entkommen vergeblich strebt" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 24).

⁶⁵ *Adelbert von Chamisso. Leben und Briefe*, Julius Eduard Hitzig ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1864), 102. See Edward Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes: The Visit of the Russian Ship Rurik to San Francisco in 1816 and the Men behind the Visit* (New York: P. Lang, 2002), 82. Chamisso traveled to Paris to collect reparation payments for emigrants.

⁶⁶ Letter to Hitzig, June 16, 1816 in *Adelbert von Chamissos Werke*, Julius Eduard Hitzig, ed. (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1852), VI, 57.

abundantly clear.⁶⁷ At age thirty-eight, Chamisso was the oldest man aboard, and did not adapt well to the strict military rules and regulations on the *Rurik*.⁶⁸ He hated military detail as his flashback to memories of his army days illustrates.⁶⁹ Even among colleagues, Chamisso felt alienated: Another scientist aboard the vessel, the Dane Morton H. Wormskiold (1783-1845), refused to collaborate with him because of his unveiled perception of Chamisso as inexperienced and leaning toward natural philosophy.⁷⁰ Chamisso felt so ostracized and imprisoned on the small vessel that an obsession with escape dominated much of his thoughts. He fantasized about jumping ship and beginning a new life in North America.⁷¹ It would have been easy for him at this point to identify with the mythical Arion, a poet like himself, (inventor of the *dithyramb*) who jumps overboard, and is transported to salvation by a dolphin. The myth's mise-en-scene as the Mediterranean Sea was associated by most northern Europeans with Arcadia, the Golden Age, and the kind of sunny setting Chamisso wished to be transported to, across the waters like Arion riding the dolphin, or like Galatea in her dolphin-drawn carriage. Fantasies about imaginary modes of transportation and faraway travel informed by mythology appear throughout Chamisso's oeuvre. They reveal a psychopathology riddled with obsessions about escape from loneliness and social isolation that, informed by mythology, emerge as metaphors. Hermes' winged sandals, for example, mutate into the "Seven-League Boots" in Chamisso's novel *Peter Schlemihl*, and Galatea's carriage into the whale-drawn vessel in the *Tagebuch*.

Chamisso found solace from states of depression through the reading of travelogues that allowed his mind to wander.⁷² In the tradition of armchair traveling that transports oneself in one's mind to exotic locations, imagination fills the gaps in detail or ideolectual lacuna (the unknown thus unknowable/not recognizable). For Chamisso, the boundaries between imagination, intuitive perception, and empirical reality were fluid, and he was determined to pursue his fantasies toward

⁶⁷ The relationship between Chamisso and Kotzebue was marred by political and ideological differences. See Mornin, *Through Alien Eyes*, 71.

⁶⁸ Adelbert von Chamisso, *Sämtliche Werke*, Perfahl, ed. (Munich:Winkler 1975), II, 23.

⁶⁹ Chamisso, *Reise*, 179 ff.

⁷⁰ Chamisso, *Reise*, 51-52.

⁷¹ Chamisso, *Reise*, 52.

⁷² Letter to Rosa Maria Varnhagen, May 18, 1812, in Hitzig, ed., *Werke*, VI, 358.

actual realization: Before his successful bid for the Romanzoff excursion, Chamisso attempted to join other expeditions such as Prince Max von Wied-Neuwied's excursion to Brazil, to escape life in Europe.⁷³ Perceptions of displacement were compounded by recent personal experience. In Germany, for example, his French heritage was viewed with suspicion due to the historical developments and politics of the time. In 1806, he had asked to be released from the Prussian military service at the outbreak of the war between France and Prussia in order to visit his dying parents in Boncourt but was forced to fight the superior French troops. As a French-speaking officer, he participated in the negotiation for the surrender of the fortress of Hameln in order to spare his men. Subsequently, the French returned him as a prisoner of honor to France. Feeling out of place in France, he managed to return to Germany where his military commission was retired in 1808. In 1810, he escaped the mounting anti-French sentiment in French-occupied Germany by traveling back to France. He writes to Madame de Stael "I am a Frenchman in Germany, and a German in France. I am at home nowhere and a stranger everywhere."⁷⁴

After traveling back and forth between Germany and francophone parts of Switzerland, he took up the study of the natural sciences in Berlin in 1812 but retreated to the remote countryside during the outbreak of the Wars of Liberation in 1813, to escape the French-German conflict. There he wrote the autobiographical novel of the itinerantly wandering Peter Schlemihl who loses his shadow, is alienated from the world, and retreats into nature to pursue the natural sciences. The autobiographical dimension of this itinerant wandering permeates the *Tagebuch*, as well. Leaving Europe on the *Rurik* upon joining the Romanzoff expedition in 1815, the year Napoleon returned from exile, set the stage for renewed political turmoil, allowed Chamisso to give his restless wanderings a professional focus and provided an escape from the problems associated with his national hybridity. This dilemma, when related to his recurrent engagement with nature as place of refuge—first pursued as a young child when escaping from the felt oppression of social conventions and etiquette of his parent's castle into the surrounding gardens and woods—corresponds to his fixation on whales. Not only does the whale serve as an emblem of unexplored nature (that is

⁷³ Du Bois-Reymond, *Adelbert von Chamisso*, 15.

⁷⁴ Hitzig, ed., *Werke*, VI, 337.

pursued by Chamisso), but of hybridity (that also defines Chamisso). Hybridity is inscribed within the figure of the whale itself as well as in the semantics of the German word *Walfisch* (whale-fish). Despite Linnaeus's classification the German use of the term persisted, signifying a mammal's migration into the aquatic habitat and lifestyle of the fish. In addition, the perceived solitary nature of the great whales was reminiscent of Chamisso's own feelings of isolation and invited a process of mental transference that facilitated the projection of a symbolic alter ego and subsequent obsession over the whale. Any attempt of observation and phenomenological description, whether by a scientist or poet, as Bert O'States puts it, "flirts with autobiography" and relies on firsthand intuitive experience as the source of evidence.⁷⁵ In addition to "scientific" sources, the poetic figures of the whale and the image of the whale-drawn vessels thus are informed by and are pertinent to a string of autobiographical sources and key experiences. As with any object of obsession and desires the liminal space between self and other narrows, and one can argue easily that Chamisso projected much of himself upon the whale, thus creating a double. The figure of the *Doppelgänger* has been well explored in conjunction with Chamisso's *Schlemihl*, and illuminates the author's obsession with the whale and the whale-drawn vessel as well. Psychoanalytical theorists have long seen the *Doppelgänger*/double as a visual manifestation of the inner self. Rank, in his discussion of Chamisso's close friend and fellow *Nordsternbund* member E. T. A. Hoffmann acknowledges the latter's "poetic licence" of creating multiple doublings as fetishistically invested images of desire.⁷⁶ Andrew J. Webber argues that the *Doppelgänger* thus becomes "integral to a circuit of potent optical illusions" as the image and other simulacra come to take the place of the object of desire.⁷⁷

Indeed, as discussed earlier, optical illusions abound in the context of Chamisso's narratives of whale sightings, and are further contextualized by descriptions of mirror images that invoke Lacan's theories related to the figure of the *Doppelgänger*.⁷⁸ Chamisso, in the *Tagebuch* describes contemplating his reflection in his soup plate while imagining

⁷⁵ Bert O'States, *Dreaming and Storytelling* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), xi.

⁷⁶ Otto Rank, *Der Doppelgänger; eine psychoanalytische Studie* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1925).

⁷⁷ Andrew J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 48.

⁷⁸ See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966).

himself transported to a separate world apart from his dinner companions, and repeatedly sees the sea smoothened to a mirror surface as a result of expelled whale liver oil.⁷⁹ Thus the author's reflected mirror image substitutes the absent whale.⁸⁰ His thoughts furthermore invoke the memory of Schlegel's poetic line about Galatea's dolphin-propelled vessel: "her chariot (drawn) over the smooth mirror of the deep." In Chamisso's accounts, the sightings of whales are always fleeting and shrouded often in banks of fog, thus more imagined than actually observed. They appear not tangible but rather as a mentally perceived *Gestalt* of projection or, as Lacan would suggest, self-projections through forms of alterity.⁸¹ Webber has argued that Chamisso's autobiographical others, like his literary *Doppelgänger* Peter Schlemihl "frequently turned into paranoiac pursuit."⁸² For Chamisso, the whale-drawn vessel and other fantasies of transportation serve as metaphors for such paranoia driven desires to escape personal anxieties. Mental health experts have established an etiological link between paranoia, narcissistic self-reflection and projection that often traces back to childhood traumas and associated psychological disorders.⁸³ Indeed the perception and projection of a lost childhood, fear of winter/death past guilt and disorder, together with anxiety over losing the opportunity of a lifetime by abandoning the expedition, all relate to the obsessive and multiple fantasies of escape.

Specifically, in the context of his recurrent preoccupation with his childhood, the enigmatic mass of the whale stands for perceived loss and the associated emotional lacuna, like a gigantic womb that Chamisso wishes to recapture and harness. Chamisso familiarity with the Homeric epics makes plausible an awareness of how Apollo as Apollon Delphinios carried Cretans over the sea in the shape of a dolphin to make them his priests. Delphinios literally translates from Greek as "womb fish" (Δελφός = womb), a term well known to Chamisso from

⁷⁹ Whales do not secrete liver oil as Chamisso states. The exception is the secretion of ambergris by the sperm whale. It does not coat and smooth the surface of the sea as described by Chamisso but forms waxy clumps. Whale excrements do not float either but sink.

⁸⁰ Chamisso, *Reise*, 296.

⁸¹ Lacan, *Écrits*, 92.

⁸² Webber, *The Doppelgänger*, 48.

⁸³ Regarding the trauma of Chamisso's childhood, compare Ulf Schou, "The Psychosocial Problems of Refugee Children: A Focus on Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia," *Psykiologisk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift* 33. (5-6) (December 1996): 467-83.

his anatomical studies.⁸⁴ The communication of the whale and the whale-drawn vessel then reveals itself as a presentation of Chamisso's inner life that he projects upon invented figures through "a process of self-tautologizing."⁸⁵

For Chamisso, the solitary existence of the whale within the vastness of the ocean constitutes an idealized natural state separate from the politics and strife experienced in industrializing Europe. His own self-perceived and frequently described status as an outsider and social misfit, if not outcast, impose upon him and subject him to an involuntarily solitude that is dreaded and confining; on the other hand solitude is desired and sought out as place where social norms and etiquette are suspended or do not apply. Chamisso's dilemma is reflected in the French term *solitude inculte* that defines solitude as an essential aspect of wilderness as well as primitivism. Chamisso—informed by his often-cited admiration of Rousseau—understood the natural state as the antithesis to the aristocratic culture from and social conventions from which he always struggled to disassociate himself. Contemporaries described Chamisso's unconventional appearance, which signified the deliberate *gestus* of a persona that merged purposely his fictitious literary alter ego such as the autobiographical character of Schlehmil with the author's actual appearance. Such accounts detail his shoulder-length hair and his unshaven face protruding from an old black *Kurtka* that was covered in dust and had its pockets stuffed with food items.⁸⁶ Chamisso thus felt out of place not only in contemporary society but also performed that status through his appearance. Even though Chamisso moved within many of the important intellectual and literary circles of his time, including Madame de Stael's salon, he felt paralyzed by the

⁸⁴ Chamisso's medical training alone would have invoked a double signifier with regard to the name dolphin. However his earlier parable of the Castalian Spring demonstrates that he not only knew various Apollo myths but that he described states of mind through figures from Greek mythology (a common practice among German intellectuals). Apollo killed the chthonic serpent Python who lived beside the Castalian Spring, and Chamisso would have identified as part of his medical training with the archer-god of medicine and healing. Chamisso's own projection of becoming a part of the dolphin/whale as its pilot or transformation like Apollo into the "womb fish" thus gains credibility.

⁸⁵ Edmund Brandl, *Emancipation gegen Anthropomorphismus: Der literarisch bedingte Wandel der goethezeitlichen Bildungsgeschichte*, (Frankfurt A. M.: Lang, 1995), 324–25.

⁸⁶ Friedrich Palm, ed., *Chamisso's Werke* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1864), vol. V, 367 f., and Nikolaus R. Schweizer, *A Poet among Explorers: Chamisso in the South Seas* (Herbert Lang: Frankfurt A. M. and Bern, 1973), 31.

conflict between the liberal ideas that were discussed and the social conventions that dominated the setting within which the gatherings took place.

I do not fit into this world (society) at all, I share nothing with them...in short: I wilt away at Castalia's fountain.⁸⁷ Even smoking is frowned upon⁸⁸ ... "I've learned *mores* at Madame de Stael...I know now that it is not permissible to swear in front of ladies, and do it nevertheless, but I know that it is bad. I know that that one should wear a dressing gown at breakfast, and dine in a white tie at seven in the evening."⁸⁹

The magnitude of his perceived collision with the norms of his own class furthermore reflects his desire to strip himself literally from social conventions. Chamisso expressed the wish to be free to walk around naked in his garden without offending anybody.⁹⁰ Nakedness is simultaneously a desired state of liberation as well as a state of vulnerability that is indicative of his alienated, migratory, if not "lost" childhood that he invoked frequently as an expression of exile and uprooting. Chamisso perceived himself "as naked as a newborn child" that has no place to call home.⁹¹ Nakedness and childlike state characterized overseas native people in the European mind. Chamisso's *Tagebuch* highlights his open admiration for native people encountered on the

⁸⁷ Castalia's fountain serves as an allegory of fertility, and is often considered to inspire poetry. Chamisso implies a double entendre: on one hand he finds himself uninspired at one of the most sophisticated literary salons, on the other, he alludes to a depressive state, and thoughts of death, because the Naiades such as Castalia, die during droughts.

⁸⁸ "Ich passe aber in diese Welt gar nicht, ich habe mit ihnen nichts...kurz ich verschmachte an diesem Quelle Kastalia's. Selbst das Rauchen wird einem sauer gemacht, etc...." Letter to W. Neumann in Berlin (1 August 1810) in Fr. Chabozy, *Über das Jugendleben Adelbert von Chamisso's* (Munich: Wolf, 1879), 14.

⁸⁹ "Ich habe by der Stael Mores gelernt, mein Lieber, ich weiss nun, dass man nicht vor Damen fluchen darf, und thue es doch, aber ich weiss, es ist übel, ich weiss, dass man im Ueberock frühstücken soll, und um Abends um 7 en habit en frac diniren" (Chabozy, *Über das Jugendleben Adelbert von Chamisso's*, 15).

⁹⁰ Hitzig, ed., *Werke*, 265.

⁹¹ Letter to Varnhagen and Neumann from Mandern where he was stationed with his regiment (28 January 1806): "Nein da daure ich es nicht aus, und ich ändere es gewaltsam;—aber ein sonstiges Unterkommen muss ich finden, denn ich bin ja nackt, wie wann ich in die Welt kommen bin, und der Menschensohn hat nicht, wo er sein Haupt lege" (cited in Chabozy, *Über das Jugendleben Adelbert von Chamisso's*, 6).

expedition, and attempted to befriend them and even to live with them.⁹² This attitude realizes the popular fascination of the era with the Noble Savage and reveals an almost desperate desire to transcend the liminal space between modern European civilization and the natural state of native peoples. Chamisso considered the Marshal Islander Kadu, who came aboard the *Rurik* for part of its journey, one of his closest friends, and clearly admired his intuitive perception of the world around him. He admired Kadu's unlimited and untainted imagination with regard to modes of travel, and laments the restrictions of modern European rational thought. As an example he cites that, contrary to Kadu, the taming of the whale for transporting vessels would be considered as a fairytale whereas the driving of geese onto the pasture is absolutely commonplace.⁹³ Such considerations reflect Romantic philosophy and its tenets of subjective world views that culminate in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) and its celebration of the creative individual freed from social conventions. Chamisso's eager studies of native ways of life entailed knowledge of spiritual beliefs. Given the comparative methodology of the day he would have linked the philosophical concept of entelechy—or universal spirit as the natural philosophers saw it—to the Pacific natives' totemic understanding of the spirit force manifested in the whale.⁹⁴ Indeed, Chamisso would have seen realized in spiritual practice the unity of nature and spirit as proposed in Schellings *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797). The extent of Chamisso's wish to experience the native spiritual union with the natural and supernatural world through the desire to trade places with the "Noble Savage" is illustrated by the calling cards he carried that read "A Wild Man from the Sandwich Islands," one of which he used

⁹² For an elaboration on this attitude as anticolonial, see Valerie Weinstein, "Reise um die Welt: The Complexities and Complicities of Adelbert von Chamisso's Anti-conquest Narratives," *German Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (1999): 377–99.

⁹³ "Die Kunde von dem Luftballe und der Luftschiffahrt, die ich ihm gab, schien ihm nicht unglaublicher und fabelhafter als die von einer pferdegezogenen Kutsche. Haben wir aber auch selber einen andern Maßstab für diese Würdigung als das Gewohnte und Ungewohnte? Dünkt uns nicht, was alltäglich für uns geworden ist, eben darum der Beachtung nicht wert und aus demselben Grunde das Unerreichte unerreichbar?—Scheint es uns nicht ganz natürlich, daß ein Knabe die Gänse auf die Weide treibt, und märchenhaft, daß man davon rede, den Walfisch zu zähmen?" (Chamisso, *Reise*, 294).

⁹⁴ Chamisso had numerous discussions about whales with the tribal peoples of the North Pacific, and used their native terms to distinguish between some of the subspecies. (e.g. *Aliomoch* (308) and *Kulliomoch* (322)).

to announce himself to Henriette Herz in Berlin in 1823.⁹⁵ During the expedition, Chamisso increasingly adopted indigenous customs in both costume and implements such as kayaks and parkas,⁹⁶ culminating in his belief that it was "paramount for any discoveries in the Polar Sea to utilize the sons of the North and their vessels."⁹⁷ Chamisso was convinced that the expedition failed because the ailing von Kotzebue was unable to leave the rational restraints of European thinking behind and become part of wilderness in order to discover it. Chamisso argued that one of the ships officers would have represented the Russian Imperial interests sufficiently in joining with a group of natives (among which Chamisso undoubtedly included himself) in kayaks toward an expedition into the far North.

In this context, as a figure of alterity, the whale embodies, and emblemizes wildness. The "spiked harness" that serves to reign in its unbridled raw natural energy simultaneously signifies the restrictions imposed by civilization that Chamisso felt. Simultaneously, it circumscribes Chamisso's dilemma at the limen between quotidian reality and projected desire. Untamed nature at sea during storms and giant waves would have made for frightening experiences in a relatively small vessel. It is in this context that Chamisso's memory of the canon shot needs to be interpreted in the context of the shots fired upon Kotzebue's order when approaching native people were perceived as too overwhelming and uncontrollable. The images of the remembered canon shot and the imagined spiked harness become means of controlling the intersection between desire and fulfilment, consumer and consumed. Indeed such association would have been gleaned from Chamisso's study of Krusenstern's text: "we saw here an amazingly large amount of whales, and so close, that the officer on watch, shortly before daybreak became alarmed by the loud splashing, believing that he was near break waters."⁹⁸ The whale in these travel accounts thus represents the forces and uncharted vastness of the sea, and serves as a figure of the sublime,

⁹⁵ "Ein Wilder von den Sandwich Islands" (cited in Schweizer, *A Poet among Explorers*, 31).

⁹⁶ Chamisso, *Reise*, 135–36.

⁹⁷ "Wahrlich, es war zweckmässig, zu Entdeckungen im Eismeer die Söhne des Nordens und ihre Fahrzeuge zu gebrauchen" (138–39).

⁹⁸ "Wir sahen hier eine erstaunlich grosse Menge von Wallfischen, und so nahe, dass der Offizier der Wache durch das starke Spritzen kurz vor Tages Anbruch alarmirt war, und nahe bey der Brandung zu seyn glaubte" (Adam J. von Krusenstern, *Reise um die Welt in den Jahren 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806* [St. Petersburg: Schnoorsche Buchdruckerei, 1810], I, 98).

something that—as Kant argued—the ocean in itself cannot.⁹⁹ The juxtaposition of the whale with Chamisso's dreamy narratives of Arcadian geographies thus fulfils the aesthetic tenets of travel literature, the oscillation between the sublime and the beautiful.

To be sure, exaggeration appears to have been a conventional practice for enhancing the often-dull narrative of maritime expeditions and to set-up the *mise-en-scene* of the exotic journey. Where Krusenstern saw “amazingly large amounts of whales,” Kotzebue observed that “thousands of walrus played around the ship, and bellowed like oxen; in between appeared whales that spewed their tall fountains; all of them came as close as possible to the *Rurik*, and appeared not to be afraid of her.”¹⁰⁰ Chamisso appropriated this key experience for himself, and personalized it by framing it between the narrative of the large ship-threatening whale and the whale-drawn vessel, taking great care not to reiterate what had been described already. For the nonnative speaker Chamisso, the semantic reading of the German word *Walross* expands through the translation of its stem components. It literally—though not etymologically—translates into “whale/horse,” one that, according to Kotzebue's description, “bellowed like an oxen.” This double-signifier for a beast of burden would have incubated further Chamisso's ideas about the whale-drawn vessel.

Chamisso's coining of the synonymous term water elephant (*Wasserelephant*) for whale references another beast of burden that is associated with transportation. Its habitat in Africa and India enhances the trope of the exotic, faraway, and mythical—the loci of Chamisso's mental escape destinations, when reading travelogues. Chamisso's use of the Indian term for elephant driver, *Karnak*, as whale tamer enhances this context, and adds authenticity and immediacy for the reader by invoking the vastness of circumnavigated territory. Chamisso's suggestion that this pilot task for the whale-drawn vessel might be available to anyone lends tangibility to and links the underlying desires of both the

⁹⁹ Immanuel Kant, “Analytik des Erhabenen,” in Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, W. Weischedel, ed. (Frankfurt/M.: 1996), 190.

¹⁰⁰ 19 August 1816. “Tausende von Wallrossen spielten um das Schiff, und brüllten wie Ochsen; mitunter erschienen Wallfische, welche hohe Fontainen spritzten; alle kamen dem Rurik so nahe wie möglich, und schienen durchaus keine Furcht davor zu haben” (Kotzebue, *Entdeckungs-Reise*, vol.1, 157).

author and his audience. Simultaneously, it inscribes the masculine and heroic as essential characteristics of the traveler/adventurer.

The whale-drawn vessel in this context corresponds closely to a Robinsonian fashioning of a utilitarian technology that operates outside and independent of industrial progress. Chamisso never takes issue with the "ingenious" yet unorthodox conclusion that a vessel propelled by a whale is superior to one powered by a steam engine powered. Indeed, the taming of the whales ties into an infatuation with the natural world that was at odds with an era of industrialization. Chamisso not only had a lifelong affinity for nature but also openly advocated a simple lifestyle. The environmental commentary enveloped in his statement about the "more promising" future of the whale-drawn vessel—as compared of one powered with steam—stresses this belief.

Indeed, fantasies of jumping overboard, solitude, and surviving in the wilderness with natural materials and technology relate to the Robinson Crusoesque figure of the shipwrecked traveler. This figure as well embodies cultural hybridity and is located at the threshold and closest common denominator between Europeans and non-Western natives. The implied allusions to the popular German literary genre of the *Robinsonade* in the *Tagebuch* are not coincidental but are part of a shrewd strategy to ensure the success of the publication. It is important to remember that Chamisso's findings had been published already, and that Kotzebue had told the story of the journey before. The ship's artist Choris as well retold it throughout his account of the journey a year later as *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde* (1822).¹⁰¹ This text capitalized on the popular format of the illustrated tour that provided the armchair traveler with folio-sized views of exotic scenes, annotated with texts that included Chamisso as one of the authors. Chamisso, interestingly, had become a central protagonist in Johann Andreas Christoph Hildebrandt's (1763–1846) adaptation of Kotzebue's text for young audiences: *Otto von Kotzebue's Entdeckungsreise in die Süd-See und nach der Berings-Straße zur Erforschung einer nordöstlichen Durchfahrt* (1821). Hildebrandt had expertise in writing adventure stories for young audiences as the author of a sequel to Joachim Heinrich Campe's (1746–1818) German adapta-

¹⁰¹ *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde, avec des portraits de sauvages d'Amérique, d'Asie, d'Afrique, et des îles du Grand Océan; des paysages, des vues maritimes, et plusieurs objets d'histoire naturelle; accompagné de descriptions par m. le Baron Cuvier, et m. A. de Chamisso, et d'observations sur les crânes humains, par m. le Docteur Gall. Par m. Louis Choris, peintre* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1822).

tion of Daniel Defoe's text.¹⁰² Chamisso and his publishers were well aware of the success of Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere* (1779/80) that had appeared in reprint frequently over the years in addition to numerous imitations. Chamisso's infatuation if not identification with the figure of Robinson Crusoe is well documented through references throughout his oeuvre, especially in the poem *Salas y Gomez* (1829). Here, Chamisso celebrates the trope of the castaway and the associated aesthetic of solitude. Similarly, the *Tagebuch* offered the opportunity to share his own feelings of exile and displacement with an audience receptive to this popular romantic trope and aesthetic. The figure of the castaway furthermore inextricably intertwines with the realm of primitivism and the noble savage. Chamisso exhibits an ongoing flirtation with these themes in the *Tagebuch*. This celebration of subjectivity that negated the dialectical relationship between art and reality in the text appealed not only to contemporary audiences but had also provided the formula for Georg Forster's fame with his travel account, *Reise um die Welt* (1778).¹⁰³ Chamisso adapted Forster's successful strategy of narrating the story of the expedition in poetic terms.

Chamisso subverts and challenges the concept of the academic travel log and its accepted claim to objective authenticity. By framing his stream of consciousness into established traditions of epistolary and diary-based narratives he adds intuitive perception to the authoritative construct of authenticity, and questions the modern canon of rational and ethnocentric perception. Altered states of perception that invoke dream-like images akin to the convention of the fairytale culminate in fantastic modes of transportation that reference the unlimited spirit world of Pacific Shaman beliefs. The inherent leaps of imagination, mirrored in the *Tagebuch*, exhibit parallels to Chamisso's novel *Schlemihl*. This earlier text, which made Chamisso famous, similarly presents a travel account, bridled only by the limits of the imagination, that describes fantastic modes of transportation such as flying carpets, balloons, and canon balls. The merging and juxtaposition of imaginary travel accounts—from the *Odyssee* via *Arabian Nights* to the tales of Baron von Munchhausen, including humorous and sentimental journeys from Grimmelshausen to Sterne—with “scientific” expedition accounts

¹⁰² Johann Andreas Christoph Hildebrandt (1763–1846), *Robinsons Kolonie: Fortsetzung von Campe's Robinson; ein unterhaltendes Lesebuch für Kinder* (Leipzig: Gräff, 1806).

¹⁰³ Werner Feudel, *Adelbert von Chamisso* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1972), 32.

from Magellan to Forster (and Ermann), reflects a deliberate dissolution of the boundaries between genres in accordance with the tenets of Schlegelian "poetization." Beyond poetization Chamisso elevates the world of imagination by placing the classical paradigm of "poieisis" over "praxis," and advocates a mind-over-matter approach that, as he phrased it, gave "thoughts wings."¹⁰⁴ Fantasies about transportation—physical or mental—serve as catharsis for anxieties, depression, and paralytic isolation on the ship through escape to imaginary, idealized if not utopian locations. Mental images of whales, floating islands, and levitating castles culminate in the whale-drawn vessel as poetic multi-referential metaphors of projection. They are informed by desires, anxieties, and traumas that lingered in the vestiges of Chamisso's mind during the composition of the *Tagebuch*, and surfaced through dreams, memories, and derive from highly subjective perceptions of experienced surroundings. The author's series of powerful images shares highly personal associations with the readers, and invites them to draw on their own, a practice that not only liberates the poetic voice from the restraints of scientific objectivity but also is central to hypnosis. Chamisso enlists his readers as witnesses and participants via narrative strategies that employ dreaming and (auto)hypnosis toward the induction of altered states of mind—as practiced in shaman cultures—in order to legitimate intuitive experience as an integral part of authentic travel observation. Chamisso's tendency toward speculation, intuition and stream of consciousness suggests that Wormskiold's suspiciousness of him as sympathetic to natural philosophy had its foundations, yet also indicates the deeply felt struggle between poet and scientist.¹⁰⁵ The conflict between transcendental thought and empirical scientific practice is negotiated via the legitimate gateway of scientific authority: the proposal of the "scientific" model of the whale-drawn vessel. The discussion of mental iconographies like the whale-drawn vessel—at the threshold between imagination and rational fact—thus reveals Chamisso's perpetual state of physical and mental locomotion between key memories and obsessions, emotional states, philosophical and scientific schools of thought, national geographies, and cultural environments.

¹⁰⁴ Chamisso, *Reise*, 146.

¹⁰⁵ Chamisso discusses this dilemma as an almost schizophrenic phenomenon. See Chamisso, *Reise*, 106.